

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Withdrawn) A method for sealing members (3,4) made of plastic-coated paper or board, the method comprising jointing of the members along a sealing line by melting the plastic coating of at least one member with a laser beam (11), the plastic coating adhering the members to each other when solidified, characterised in that the members (3,4) to be sealed are gripped adjacent the sealing line in order to retain the members in position during the sealing and in that the sealing is performed by means of a sealing means (7) which moves along the sealing line and presses the members apart in order to keep the seal point open, directs a laser beam (11) to the open seal point for melting the plastic and finally presses the members against each other for closing the seal.

2. (Withdrawn) A method as defined in claim 1, characterised in that one of the paper or board members is sealed at a crease (6) formed at its edge, with the members (3,4) overlapping along the sealing line.

3. (Withdrawn) A method as defined in claim 2, characterised in that the method comprises sealing of the opposite edges (3,6) of a blank (1) made of plastic-coated paper or board to each other.

4. (Withdrawn) A method as defined in claim 3, characterised in that the method comprises a seal along a side of a bag or container package.

5. (Withdrawn) A method as defined in any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the laser beam (11) is surrounded with a protective gas.

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for sealing members made of plastic-coated paper or board by a method comprising

jointing of the members along a sealing line by melting the plastic coating of at least one member with a laser beam, the plastic coating adhering the members to each other when solidified, wherein the members to be sealed are gripped adjacent the sealing line in order to retain the members in position during the sealing and

performing sealing by means of a sealing means which moves along the sealing line and presses the members apart in order to keep a seal point open, directs a laser beam to the open seal point for melting the plastic, and finally presses the members against each other for closing the seal, the laser sealing means performing a reciprocating movement,

wherein said apparatus comprises a clamp for retaining two paper or board members in position, located with respect to each other and to a sealing line, and a laser sealing means movable along the sealing line ~~and~~, said laser sealing means comprising

(i) a means for opening the seal point, ~~said means~~ by pressing sealable members apart,
(ii) a laser head for directing a laser beam melting a plastic coating to the opened seal point, and

(iii) as the last, a seal closing means for pressing the members against each other,
said means for opening the seal point, said laser head, and said seal closing means being disposed to form an integral unit so that a reciprocating movement is performed along the sealing line.

7. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein the means for opening the seal point comprises two successive wedge-shaped elements pushing in between the paper or board members along the sealing line and wherein the laser head directs the laser beam to the seal point between these elements.

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus as defined in claim 6 or 7, wherein the clamp has jaws, between which the two paper or board members to be sealed are clamped.